

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 7637

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSES NATION; NEXT ELECTIONS APRIL 25

SUMMARY: IN DEC 23 ADDRESS PRIME MINISTER AZEVEDO
ANALYZED PORTUGUESE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND COMMENTED BRIEFLY
ON CABINET RESHUFFLING AND FUTURE ROLE OF MILITARY. COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS RECOMMENDED DEC 24 THAT ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL
LEGISLATURE BE HELD BY APRIL 25, 1976. END SUMMARY.

1. SOBERING ECONOMIC NEWS: IN LENGTHY DEC 23 TV SPEECH
PRIMARILY GIVEN TO SOBERING ANALYSIS OF PORTUGAL'S ECONOMIC
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SITUATION, PRIME MINISTER PINHEIRO DE AZEVEDO STATED THAT

TO WISH PORTUGUESE PEOPLE TRADITIONAL "PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR"
WOULD BE ACT OF "DEMOAGOGERY," SINCE "ONLY BY A MIRACLE
COULD IT BE SO," GIVEN COUNTRY'S FORMIDABLE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SEPTEL.

2. COMMENTS ON GOVERNMENT: PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED ADDRESS
WITH BRIEF REMARKS ON POLITICAL SITUATION. HE DENIED THAT
GOVERNMENT WAS UNDERGOING CRISIS, TERMING CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS
TO RESTRUCTURE CABINET "ADJUSTMENTS" WHICH HAD "NATURALLY"
REKINDLED RIVALRIES BETWEEN PARTIES REPRESENTED IN GOVERNMENT.
HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED ITS IDENTITY
AND ITS DETERMINATION TO LEAD PORTUGAL TOWARD DEMOCRACY AND
SOCIALISM.

3. ROLE OF MILITARY: AZEVEDO ALSO COMMENTED ON FUTURE ROLE
OF ARMED FORCES IN POLITICAL PROCESS. NOTING THAT "THERE
ARE THOSE WHO WISH (ARMED FORCES) TO RETURN TO BARRACKS AND
THOSE WHO WISH THEM TO REMAIN IN POWER", HE STATED THAT TIMING OF
RETURN TO BARRACKS WOULD DEPEND ON ABILITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES
TO ATTAIN SUFFICIENT POLITICAL "MATURITY" TO MAKE ARMED
FORCES "ARBITER" ROLE UNNECESSARY. ARMED FORCES REMAIN "IMBUED,"
HOWEVER, WITH DESIRE TO BE REPLACED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

4. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS: IN EARLY HOURS OF DEC 24, COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS (CM) RELEASED LENGTHY COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCING
DECISIONS REACHED DURING DEC 23-24 MEETING. MOST DECISIONS
DEALT WITH ECONOMIC MATTERS. IN
RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS BY INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS, HOWEVER,
C. EXPRESSED ITS OPINION AS A BODY THAT:
-- ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SHOULD
TAKE PLACE BY APRIL 25, 1976.

-- AS A TIME SAVING MEASURE, VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS FOR
NEW ELECTIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON THOSE FOR APRIL 25, 1975
ELECTIONS FOR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

--GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT INTERVENE IN MANAGEMENT OF NEWSPAPER
"REPUBLICA," WHOSE DIRECTOR WAS RELIEVED OF HIS DUTIES
AT HIS OWN REQUEST DEC 23 BY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, PROMPTING
"REPUBLICA" WORKERS TO SHUT DOWN PRESSES SAME DAY SEPTEL).
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5. COMMENT: AZEVEDO CAME ACROSS AS SERIOUS AND DECISIVE. GOP,
THROUGH MESSAGES FROM COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, COUNCIL OF THE REVOLU-
TION, AND NOW THE PRIME MINISTER CONTINUES TO PREPARE THE PUBLIC
FOR A PERIOD OF AUSTERITY.

6. APRIL 25, 1976 IS PROBABLY REALISTIC DATE FOR ELECTIONS
GIVEN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND FACT THAT IT FALLS ON SUNDAY--

THE PREFERRED DAY FOR ELECTIONS IN PORTUGAL/
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